Collection, and Honorary Archivist for the Fry Art Gallery Society for these volunteers.

Special Exhibitions in the Fry Art Gallery.

Our newly appointed Archivists have suggested that the Gallery's exhibiting history since 1987 ought to be brought together and recorded for posterity.

This has now been done, and the 88 exhibitions over 34 years (which is no mean achievement) have been brought together in one leaflet, enclosed.

The Fry Art Gallery Society was formed late in 1985 and after financing and refurbishing the building, which had been unused for about 15 years, it reopened the Gallery in 1987.

In the early days it was the practice to use the smaller room (the Gibson Room) to display the collection that the Fry family had left on site, and for the larger room to show the Collection, enabling fresh additions to be added each year. This practice gradually changed, firstly when bespoke exhibitions were introduced in the Gibson Room, and when the other room exhibitions no longer consisted of the now much larger permanent collection, but was modified to reflect themes, drawn from the Collection, occasionally enhanced by loans.

Eighty-seven exhibitions (excluding displays in the Bawden Room) over 34 years is something of an achievement, and we have listed them in the accompanying leaflet.

Don't forget that you can follow our news on Facebook and Twitter, as well as our blog at *fryartgallery.blog*

The Fry Art Gallery, 19a Castle Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1BD
01799 513779 www.fryartgallery.org

NEWSLETTER MAY 2021

THE FRY ART GALLERY SOCIETY

We plan to re-open on May 29th.

With apologies for the delay while we waited for the tenders to be considered, and despite the uncertainties and disruption in our daily lives since we were last in touch in the autumn, we are pleased to be able to report that the good ship Fry Gallery has continued on course.

During the past six months we have:

- Achieved our Appeal target.
- We have gone out to tender and have a contractor.
- We have temporarily moved, for this year, 200 yards up the road and will be functioning in Fry Gallery Too from May 29th.

The Appeal and the cost revealed

Thanks to the generosity of 400 members who contributed £156,700, the assistance given to us by nine charitable trusts totalling £151,000 and a legacy of £6,200 we added to the £106,000 accumulated over the years in the building reserve and were able to bank the target figure £420,000.

The lowest tender, received in April, and which we need to accept shortly if we are to implement our plans and also vacate rented alternative accommodation at the earliest opportunity, amounted to £600,000, when fees and VAT were included. As we go to press discussions between ourselves, Wilby & Burnett, our architects and the contractor are still underway to plan how to proceed. Coordinating discussions during the present restrictions between three sets of consultants, the contractor and John Ready, the Trustee who is acting on our behalf, is taking time but we anticipate that ultimately the tender figure can be reduced by some £50,000. The Trustees of the Society have therefore decided to reduce to the absolute minimum its reserves by releasing another £65,000 to the Appeal, and adding two legacies subsequently notified totalling £15,000, we are now working on the assumption that a further £50,000 is still needed.

We are grateful to all those who have already donated so generously, but we very much hope that some of this shortfall may be met by the remaining 850 members coming to our aid. We will otherwise have to meet any shortfall from other sources.

Those willing to assist in this final thrust are asked to follow the instructions on the enclosed leaflet by making payment to the Fry Art Gallery Fund Raising account at sort code 20-74-05, account number 13512290 or by sending any cheque to the Treasurer, c/o 25 Barley Road, Great Chishill, SG8 8SB.

Fry Gallery Too

This is located in the former schoolroom, immediately on your right on entering the grounds of Saffron Walden Museum, off Museum Street and is about two minutes walk eastwards from our normal site. It is very accessible, with step free access, is near at hand, and a bit 'tight' space-wise, but we nevertheless have a full programme.

The 2001 Exhibition Programme in Fry Gallery Too

Our plan is to open on May 29th but this is dependent on whatever restrictions may still apply on that date. You are earnestly advised to consult our website to make sure. Because of the pandemic regulations we are compelled to operate with pre-booked admissions. Free bookings may be made on the Plan Your Visit page of our website, *fryartgallery.org*

If the current pandemic regulations are relaxed during the coming months we would be able to abandon pre-booking but it would still be wise to consult our website to make doubly sure. Equally, should matters deteriorate and we are compelled to close, you should be aware. For advice the telephone number to ring during scheduled opening hours is 01799 520679.

Our experience with timed admissions during the few weeks we were able to open in 2020 showed it to be an arrangement that worked well and efficiently and with no problems - except that we had fewer visitors! But those who did come appreciated the tranquility and relaxed atmosphere created by our valued Invigilators.

There will two concurrent exhibitions this year.

A Singular Obsession: Michael Ayrton Centenary Exhibition

Andrew Jenkins has curated this exhibition. The Goldmark Gallery is a sponsor.

Michael Ayrton (1921-1975) was a precocious, individual, productive and passionate artist, whose oeuvre spanned painting, sculpture, drawing, illustration and theatre design. An outspoken intellect, critic, author and consummate communicator, Ayrton lived in the North West Essex village of Toppesfield for over 20 years until his untimely death.

The exhibition will focus on his sculptural output between 1953 and 1974, combining twelve bronzes, loaned by his estate, together with work from the permanent collection. Work in other media and extensive archive material will complete a timely assessment of an artist who undoubtedly ranks amongst the finest English painters and sculptors of the mid-20th century.

Lithograhic Fever: Bardfield and Britain's mid-century print boom.

Michael Clegg has curated this exhibition and Sworders Auctioneers are a sponsor.

Colour lithography blossomed in the years after the Second World War, with some commentators evidently seeing this as a threat, Meanwhile, schemes like School Prints and the Lyons Corner House series were popular and the Festival of Britain in 1951 and the 1953 Coronation gave added impetus. Four of the artists living in Great Bardfield then, Bawden, Rothenstein, Rowntree and Aldridge, were involved, as were Sheila Robinson and Bernard Cheese.

Further afield, Keith Vaughan, Robert Colquhoun and Robert MacBryde made their contributions. This exhibition is an opportunity to look back at what one Arts Council official had called a "fever", and better assess its significance.

The Gallery will be open from May 29th until October 31st on Sundays, Tuesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Bank Holidays from 2.00pm - 5 00 pm and Saturdays from 11.00am - 5 00pm.

Group visits outside normal hours are welcome by arrangement.

Annual Exhibition and Sale

To avoid Rememberance Sunday, we intend to hold our Annual Sale and Exhibition on 13th and 14th November in Fry Too, trusting that Covid restrictions will have been sufficiently eased by then. However, we are also working on an alternative online event in case we have to cancel - watch this space!

Fry Art Gallery Society

The AGM was held on 17 October 2020 under special pandemic arrangements, and the participation by members in the ballot is appreciated. The retiring Trustees were re-appointed, and the four Trustees whose retirement had previously been reported in the July Newsletter were formally thanked for their service. Mr Roderick Newton QC was elected as a Trustee.

The Report for 2019 and the accounts, which are still available on the website *www.frvartgallery.org/ReportandAccounts2019* (and proceed to "About Us"), were agreed. There was no speaker on this occasion.

In January this year David Oelman, who has been Chairman since 2012, retired and Gordon Cummings, who is also the Secretary, has assumed this role while the Society Trustees appoint a new Chairman. David Oelman's period of office embraced two successful fundraising projects. Firstly in 2015 when the freehold of the Gallery was purchased and in 2020 when funds were raised to carry out future improvements to the building. In addition, external grants were successfully obtained from the National Heritage Lottery Fund for work by Keith Vaughan and others, all of which enabled valuable additions to be made to the Permanent Collection.

Members' Email Addresses

While we intend to carry on publishing Newsletters during each year it has been found useful, particularly to notify any sudden changes forced upon us in these fast changing times, to be able to communicate with members when we have an email address. If you would like to be included, please email *gcummings@fryartgallery.org*

Website

The Gallery website is also worth keeping under review. It gives a vehicle for publicising sudden changes, but is also editorially refreshed periodically. In particular we would mention a new series that commenced this year, "Work of the Week", (go to the website and proceed via Art & Artists) which illustrates and provides background information about a number of widely selected items, well known and not, from the Permanent Collection.

Subscriptions

Subscriptions became due on April 1st and if you are not one of our members who pay by standing order please do send your £10 minimum sub to the Membership Secretary c/o Larkfield, Bawtree Crescent, Linton, Cambridge, CB21 4XQ

Marbling help wanted

The entrance hall to the Gallery was revolutionised in 1987when Mark Fry marbled the previously bleak whitewashed walls. "Sumptuous" was the superlative chosen by the architectural historian Olive Cooke to describe the overall effect and it has certainly contributed to the welcoming ambience that we seek to create.

The improvements to the Gallery which will be getting underway this summer mean that a new area will ultimately need matching marbling, and some touching-up of wear and tear elsewhere could be done at the same time. We now find ourselves anxious to find an individual or firm who could undertake this work in December. If any member can offer assistance please do get in touch with John Ready on 01799 528158, by email, *johnready569@btinternet.com*, or by letter at the Gallery.

On-line Sales

We have now produced four items based on Ravilious and Bawden designs which are unique and have proved to be greatly appreciated. In order to enable everyone to enjoy them we are currently preparing to offer them on-line. The items which have been developed exclusively, in conjunction with Webb & Webb Design, are:

Edward Bawden	Cushion cover. *Play with Me*
Eric Ravlious.	Cushion cover. *Bird*
Eric Ravilious.	Apron *Autumn Fruits*
Eric Ravilious.	Fabric. *Design for a Child's Handkerchief.*

When our online service is operational shortly, with many items and works of art available, details will be posted on the website. Full information will be included in the next Newsletter. Meanwhile personal callers will still be able to purchase over the counter in the Gallery.

Personal

We are particularly sorry to report the death of three members.

Olga Marshall, who died aged 99 last November, is an artist represented in the North West Essex Collection by virtue of her work illustrating books on marine biology in conjunction with her husband, N B (Freddie) Marshall, FRS. The Marshalls lived next door to - and were great friends with - Edward Bawden after he had moved to Saffron Walden in 1970.

Louis Ullmann, who died suddenly last month, accompanied his encouragement with the constant support that he gave to his wife Anne in her busy administration of the legacy of her parents Eric Ravilious and Tirzah Garwood. Additionally, he generously assented to the sale in 2018 to the Gallery of the watercolour by Ravilious, *Two Women in a Garden,* thereby enabling many more people to enjoy it.

David Scrase

Frances Spalding, the current chairperson of the North West Essex Collection Trust, contributes the following appreciation of David Scrace (1949-2020) who died in October 2020:

"When the North West Essex Collection Trust was set up as a safeguard for the Fry Art Gallery collection, Duncan Robinson, then director of the Fitzwilliam Museum, became its first Chair. As his retirement approached, he asked one of his colleagues, David Scrase, to become a trustee of the NWECT and in this way the link between the Fitzwilliam and the Fry was maintained. David may not have been very familiar with the Fry Art Gallery on arrival, but he soon became whole-heartedly enthusiastic about its collection.

He took a particular interest in the conservation issues connected with works on paper: he advised against sending out works of art on loan to lengthy touring exhibitions, and insisted on their need to 'rest' on their return. His museum experience, gained at the Fitzwilliam, where he worked from 1976 to 2013, assisted the Fry Art Gallery in small ways and large, for he also gave David Oelman helpful advice and contacts when money had to be raised for the purchase of the Gallery's freehold. He served on the NWECT from 2008 to 2019, acting as its Chair for the last four of those years.

David had a nimble mind and a quick wit. He could puncture solemnity with a quietly spoken small remark. He could also be very sharp, for his standards were high. In 2011 he published the first systematic catalogue of the Fitzwilliam's collection of Italian drawings from the 14th to the 20th century. In answer to a request to see certain prints or drawings in the Fitzwilliam, he would bring out some of its many treasures with a willing alacrity, commenting as he did so on some of the objects.

He was single-handed, as polio had left him with a defective arm. Yet what today would be termed a disability just seemed part of his specialness and uniqueness. It did not prevent him developing horticultural and culinary skills, the former finding expression in the garden connected with the house in the South of France bought by his partner Rick Mather, the architect who successfully introduced radical reinvention into distinguished museums, including Dulwich Picture Gallery, the Wallace Collection and the Ashmolean. After Rick died in 2013 David decided to seek retirement after 37 years at the Fitzwilliam.

The occasional pirouette which David might suddenly perform in a person's office was a throw-back to the period when he had been Margot Fonteyn's dresser. A short interview with him forms part of Tony Palmer's film *Margot*. He retained always a great love of opera and ballet, and he is remembered by many for his flair and sophistication, his teasing humour, loyalty and deep kindness."

Bequests

We have benefited greatly from bequests following the passing of Mrs Mary Knight, Mrs Virginia Chapman, Miss Cecily Rogers, Michael Hennings and Yvonne, Mrs Norah Rogerson, and Mrs Sue Molineaux.

Acquisitions

Since the last Newsletter we have acquired two further works by John Aldridge RA - a watercolour sketch of Dunwich (presented by Ms Helen Powell) and an oil painting of Gt Bardfield Fair (1936) which was purchased.

Two further works, lithographs by Chloe Cheese, have been received on transfer from the former Derbyshire Schools and Library Collection, and a stoneware bottle executed by Ian Auld has been acquired at auction.

Alan Powers has presented one of the limited edition of a child's handkerchief, designed in 1941 by Ravilious, which was produced by the Judd Street Gallery in 1989. This gift coincides with a fresh edition of the handkerchief, taken from one of the five cotton handkerchiefs originally produced in 1941, which the Fry Art Gallery will sell in a small edition as a fundraiser. These are now on sale.

Archivists

The Gallery has two burgeoning streams of archives, one relating to the artists in the Collection and ranges from letters to press cuttings, and the other being the Society's records going back to1985. These have always been kept apart from the Permanent Collection, and encompass Minute Books, and routine correspondence, as well as legal documents concerned with the Society.

Two members, Kate Brown and Simon Gough, who have been working on Marianne Straub's scrapbooks which are a valuable source of information, have offered to give oversight to the Collection items.

Another member, Lynn Morrison has offered to sort the Society's papers. Accordingly we have created posts of Honorary Archivist to the North West Essex